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The Washington Merry-go-round

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CIA agent's unpublished book attacks CIA's secrecy demands



WASHINGTON — A veteran CIA agent has just written an explosive book, charging that the agency's top brass have repeatedly lied about its secret operations to the public, the Congress and even the president. The revelations could stymie the congressional campaign to loosen the leash on the CIA.

The agent, Ralph McGehee, spent 25 years with the CIA in a variety of assignments. He has produced an unpublished manuscript that debunks many of the CIA's arguments for greater secrecy. My associate Dale Van Atta interviewed McGehee, and was allowed to examine the book-length manuscript.

McGehee is no Philip Agee, out to destroy the CIA by identifying former colleagues and endangering their lives. But his disillusionment runs deep, and he lays out the reasons for it articulately on moral grounds.

"I did not reach my apostasy easily," he explains, noting that he chose the CIA for a career in 1952, fresh out of Notre Dame, where he played four years on undefeated football teams.

Essentially, McGehee charges that the CIA uses secrecy to cover up incompetence, bureaucratic bungling and illegal activities. "Other than identity of sources and any unique technological collection processes," he writes, the CIA "does not have any secrets to protect."

Here are some of McGehee's charges:

- "It has been my observation that most everything an agency official says about the agency is either false or so misleading as to convey a greatly false impression," he declares.

- Every word in public announcements by CIA officials should be examined for deception. For instance, the word "currently," as in, "we currently no longer employ American journalists as CIA operatives," may mean nothing more than that the newsmen were fired in time for the announcement and then rehired.

- Articles on the CIA in *Time* and *Newsweek* two years ago "drew upon official CIA sources who continued their policy of undeviating dishonesty." For example, one of the stories reported that a human agent provided the first solid evidence that China was about to set off an atom bomb, "thereby scooping the spy satellites." McGehee had personally been assigned to check that claim and found it to be untrue — but it suited the purposes of CIA brass who wanted to

justify use of human agents.

- President Ford was given a glowing account of a superspy with supposed access to critical inside information. "Not mentioned was the fact that the agent had been completely unproductive, and . . . his eager salary of less than \$100 a month had been suspended."

Footnote: McGehee dutifully submitted his manuscript to the CIA, and made the deletions ordered. The agency has refused comment to us.

INFORMING IVAN: The chill in Soviet-American relations hasn't interrupted the flow of U. S. government

publications that are shipped regularly to the Soviet Union, courtesy of the American taxpayers.

The U. S. government exchanges publications with several countries. The Soviet Union, as you might guess, gets the best of the swap — six times more pamphlets packed with 100 times more information.

This annoys Sen. Jim Sasser, D-Tenn., who had conducted his own private investigation. Here are some of his findings:

- It cost \$12,000 in fiscal year 1979 to send the Kremlin some 23,000 documents, including the Defense Intelligence Agency's "Review of Soviet Ground Forces" and CIA maps and atlases of Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Angola, Pakistan, Israel and South Korea.

- It cost just about as much over the same period of time to see that Fidel Castro received our government publications, including copies of the U. S. Army's field manual, technical manual and a guide to the LANCE missile.

- Even the Iranian government is on Uncle Sam's free mailing list. The hostage holders get some 3,100 publications at a cost of \$1,800 that year.

The cost figures, incidentally, don't include mailing, which is also paid by the American taxpayers.

BRASS RING: Not all Washington bureaucrats, holed up in their cubicles, lose the human touch. At Peace Corps headquarters, for example, Mary Lusk took a call the other day from the family

of David Rubin, a volunteer in Jamaica. It was bad news; Rubin's brother had died unexpectedly.

The standard bureaucratic notice would have been a cold cablegram. But Lusk put through an emergency telephone call to Kingston, Jamaica. In a matter of hours, Rubin was on his way home. Lusk kept the Rubin family advised of his progress, meanwhile, with phone calls to their Silver Spring, Md., home every two hours.

DEATH OF A BUSINESS: Mobil Oil tried unsuccessfully to bully the Public Broadcasting Service into scrapping "Death of a Princess," a film the company's Saudi Arabian supplier didn't like. But it's having more success strong-arming a Mobil service station operator who's selling a product the company doesn't like.

Herb Staretz operates a six-pump Mobil station in Passaic, N.J. Or at least he thought he did, until he made the mistake of selling gasohol, the gasoline-alcohol mixtures that is anathema to Big Oil.

On March 3, Staretz began selling gasohol at one of his pumps, with signs stating clearly that "This is not a Mobil product." Three days later, Mobil's area sales manager paid Staretz a visit and told him the company was "prepared to go to the wall" to stop him from selling the alternative fuel.

Staretz was pointedly informed that Mobil has gone to court to prevent other dealers from marketing gasohol with pumps leased from the company. But in this case, Mobil took more direct action: On April 24, it simply notified Staretz that his franchise would be terminated.

For trying to help ease the nation's dependence on foreign oil, Staretz could be out of business by July 31.

MEMO TO DEMOCRATS: You may have the impression that Jimmy Carter has triumphed in the Democratic primaries. This has not been the true verdict of the voters. In state after state, a majority of Democrats have made it clear that they don't want Carter in the White House for another four years.

The president has been credited with winning primaries that he really lost. He defeated Sen. Ted Kennedy, it's true, in such states as Maine and New Hampshire, Maryland and Nebraska. Yet in each of those states, Carter wound up with less than half the Democratic votes.

Such key states as Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania gave him only

46.6 percent, 41 percent and 46.8 percent of the vote, respectively. No elected incumbent president in modern times has done so poorly in his party primaries.

Indeed, tens of thousands of Democrats have trekked to the polls to vote "no preference." Hundreds of thousands have stayed home because they couldn't accept the available choices. If the Democratic convention heeds the majority, it will replace Carter as the party nominee. If it does not, Ronald Reagan probably will be the next president.

WHITE HOUSE PIPELINE : As a matter of courtesy, the White House traditionally gives members of Congress the word when a federal project is undertaken in the member's district. This allows the congressman to make the announcement and get a little credit among his constituents. But the favor has been rescinded for many House members who happen to support Sen. Edward Kennedy. They now learn about federal grants in their districts from the newspapers.

• Normally, when the president or vice president is going to make a speech out of town, the congressman in whose district the event will take place is informed so he can plan accordingly. But Vice President Walter Mondale's office neglected to tell Rep. Don Edwards, D-Calif., that Mondale was going to San Jose recently. The first Edwards knew about the visit was when the local school board called the day before to ask if "Hail Columbia" was an appropriate song to play for the vice president.

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